

**Statement of Madeleine Z Bordallo before the National
Research Council
March 24, 2004**

Chairman Julian Preston, members of the Committee and Dr. Isaf Al-Nabulsi, thank you for the opportunity to give a brief statement here today. I would also like to acknowledge Mr. Robert Celestial and Guam Senator Carmen Fernandez who have come a long way to be here today.

Three weeks ago marked the 50th anniversary of the BRAVO shot, the largest Hydrogen nuclear weapons test in United States history. Today, the legacy of U.S. nuclear testing in the Pacific remains, with many questions surrounding this testing still to be answered. While our neighbor's in the Marshall Island's have an established program to assist them with the impact of radiation exposure, there is no such mechanism for reviewing the impact these tests and the subsequent decontamination of radioactive naval vessels had in Guam. I therefore respectfully request that the Committee consider Guam in fulfilling its Congressional mandate to "recommend other classes of individuals or additional geographic areas" to be covered under the Radiation Exposure and Compensation Act (RECA).

Any report concerning RECA should ensure that all U.S. citizens, whether they live in Guam or the Northern Marianas, or they live in Wayne County, Utah or Gila County, Arizona, have a full accounting for past and present risks resulting from U.S. nuclear testing programs. It is important to study the consequences of both the Pacific nuclear tests and the Nevada nuclear tests. Specific to Guam, the Committee should consider both primary exposure from nuclear fallout and secondary exposure from the decontamination of Navy craft.

One compelling concern the Committee should consider is whether the decontamination of radioactive naval vessels in Guam's harbor meets the "onsite" criteria of RECA, which includes:

“Any designated location within a Naval Shipyard, Air Force Base, or other official government installation where ships, aircraft, or other equipment used in an atmospheric nuclear detonation were decontaminated.”

The Navy has ship’s logs of repeated visits by contaminated vessels. These records are reinforced by personal testimony of Navy personnel stationed in Guam. Again, the Committee should consider if the impact of this activity in Guam is similar to other jurisdictions being considered for coverage under RECA.

Another concern to be addressed is the issue of nuclear “down winder” fallout in Guam. Although, the Department of Energy’s review conducted in 2002 did not find significant levels of radiation in Guam it cautioned that, “it would be difficult to provide an accurate retrospective assessment of doses to the Guam population exposed to fresh fallout.” The Guam Legislature’s 2001 *Blue Ribbon Panel on Radioactive Contamination in Guam* suggests a significant harmful effect from radiation borne from the prevailing westerly winds from the Pacific test sites. By making an independent assessment of Guam’s level of exposure, as it has in jurisdictions exposed to radiation from the Nevada Test Site, the Committee could bring closure to this debate.

Congress has recognized that questions remain about the current coverage of RECA. I believe that the challenge before the Committee is to ensure parity for all U.S. citizens in any revised criteria it puts forth. That can only be achieved if questions regarding radiation exposure from Pacific nuclear testing and the use of locations such as Guam to decontaminate vessels present at the test site are finally resolved. I thank the Committee for its consideration of these issues, and stand ready to assist in any way I can to facilitate the work of the Committee.